
The Delaware: River of the Year

The Delaware was named Pennsylvania's Feature River of the Year for 2002, an accolade that garnered heightened awareness for a waterway whose natural wonders beckon those yearning for a true river adventure.

"It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest personal regards to everyone gathered for the Delaware River Sojourn and to join you in celebrating Pennsylvania's Feature River of the Year during June Rivers Month," remarked Pennsylvania Governor Mark Schweiker. "Pennsylvania is fortunate to join with the states of New York, New Jersey, and Delaware to promote stewardship of our natural resources by placing a renewed emphasis on the Delaware ..."



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
HARRISBURG

THE GOVERNOR

GREETINGS:

It gives me great pleasure to extend my warmest personal regards to everyone gathered for the Delaware River Sojourn and to join you in celebrating "Pennsylvania's Feature River of the Year" during June Rivers Month. Pennsylvania is fortunate to join with the states of New York, New Jersey and Delaware to promote stewardship of our natural resources by placing a renewed emphasis on the Delaware River and the many tributaries within its watershed that contribute to its flow and aesthetic and recreational values.

During this eight-day journey to promote river awareness, participants will learn about the 330 mile-long river that fueled the American Industrial Revolution. Events will highlight the Delaware's surroundings, its history and the new projects and activities planned to enhance the river and its tributaries. Sojourners will experience a river with many faces and assets as they travel on the upper river, which supports a world-class fishery and challenges canoeists and kayakers as they make their path through rocks and riffles; a middle river that embraces the natural and aesthetic beauty of its surroundings; and a lower river that enhances the economy of the area by supporting a myriad of industries including one of the nation's largest oil refining petrochemical centers.

Over the past two decades, this special river has benefited from federal, interstate, state and local commitments to restore and conserve its precious waters such as the Delaware River Basin Compact, Federal Scenic and Recreation River designation; and state and local partnerships. River Conservation Plans now cover more than 86 percent of the Delaware River watershed in Pennsylvania.

As Governor, I would like to commend the work of those who reflect our belief that our quality of life depends on the health of our natural resources. My special thanks goes to all of you who have actively committed your time and efforts to conserving the river and promoting river awareness, and who have appropriately developed this resource to enhance our economic viability and future.

On behalf of all Pennsylvanians, I offer my best wishes for continued partnerships in our work to restore, maintain, and enhance the Delaware's scenic beauty, water quality and quantity. I hope you have an enjoyable and successful river journey on a truly Revolutionary River!

A handwritten signature in dark ink, reading "Mark Schweiker".
MARK SCHWEIKER
Governor

John C. Oliver, secretary of the commonwealth's Department of Conservation and Natural Resources, offered these comments in a letter to 2002 Sojourn Chair Carol R. Collier: "As you know, the Delaware has long been one of my favorite rivers and one I have had the pleasure of canoeing in past years. It is a river of extraordinary quality and purpose, a resource that touches millions of lives. It is well deserving of this recognition from the Commonwealth."

"I look forward to a successful Delaware River Sojourn ... I also look forward to our continued partnership, working together ... to maintain, restore and enhance our valued water resources."

The 2002 Sojourn was, indeed, a success. Over 500 paddlers took to the river and two tidal tributaries on a 74-mile journey. Paddlers from all walks of life -- grandparents, children, teachers, government officials -- took part. Many were folks who simply wanted to trade in the cacophony of cyberspace and life's other frenetic distractions for a peaceful day or two on the water.

To showcase the entire river's myriad attractions, sojourners spend time on the Upper Delaware, the Middle Delaware, and the estuary (the tidal reach). They can paddle for a day, maybe two, or for the entire trip and become a "through-tripper," one who becomes fully immersed in the camaraderie engendered by a week-long joint venture with nature, and the friendships that endure until next year's trip ... and far beyond. There were 11 through-trippers in 2002 and five who only missed one day of the eight-day journey.

Over its eight-year history, the Delaware River Sojourn has focused attention on the river, creating a growing awareness of the important role it plays in the lives of the more than seven million people who live within the watershed.

The theme for the 2002 sojourn was "The Delaware: A Revolutionary River."

The Delaware, indeed, has witnessed its share of revolutions.



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Carol R. Collier, Chair
Delaware River Sojourn Steering Committee
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Dear Ms. Collier: *Carol*

It is my pleasure to inform you the Delaware River has been selected the "Pennsylvania Feature River of the Year" 2002. Your letter, as well as members of my staff, have built a very convincing case to choose the Delaware River.

As you know, the Delaware has long been one of my favorite rivers and one I have had the pleasure of canoeing in past years. It is a river of extraordinary quality and purpose, a resource that touches millions of lives in several states. It is well deserving of this recognition from the Commonwealth.

I applaud your efforts as well as the work of many federal, state and local organizations and individuals in the watershed who have dedicated themselves to conserving and protecting the Delaware River and its surrounding watershed.

I look forward to a successful Delaware Sojourn, kicking off our June Rivers Month activities and sojourns statewide. I also look forward to our continued partnership, working together to promote stewardship and maintain, restore and enhance our valued water resources.

My staff and I are eager to embark with you on the planning of a Delaware River journey.

Sincerely yours,

John C. Oliver
John C. Oliver
Secretary

Let's get together on the River -

Stewardship Partnership Service

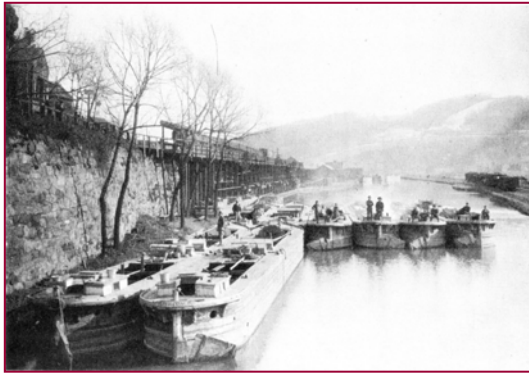
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George Washington and his Continental Army crossed its ice-choked waters on Christmas night, 1776, ambushing a party of Hessian troops in Trenton. It was a turning point in the Revolutionary War.

Pennsylvania's Lehigh Valley helped jump start America's Industrial Revolution. It was the power of water that fueled the valley's renaissance in mechanization – swift currents turning the water wheels that made the factories run.

Three canals converged in Easton, providing passageways for shipping anthracite coal to Philadelphia and New York. Water and coal helped transform these and other East Coast cities into bustling hubs of heavy industry and commerce.



Port Delaware (near Phillipsburg, N.J.) was the location where during the Industrial Revolution coal barges from the Lehigh River crossed the Delaware and entered the Morris Canal on their way across New Jersey to Newark. (Courtesy of William Augustine)

Timber played a role, too, water its deliverance. Log rafts rode the spring freshets to markets located along the lower Delaware River where the vessels were disassembled and the pine and hemlock logs fashioned into spars and masts for the lordly ships of the British Main.

The wood also was used to make furniture and in the hand-laying of the ships' hulls. Stout logs later became masts for warships like the U.S.S. Constitution ("Old Ironsides"), built in Philadelphia's shipyards for the fledgling U.S. Navy. The valley's lumber carried sails through battles with the Barbary pirates at Tripoli and in engagements against the British fleet during the War of 1812.

On the Schuylkill, the Delaware's largest tributary, other revolutions were taking place, both mechanical and cultural. Fairmount Water Works, which housed the world's first high-pressure steam engine, was by the mid-19th Century being heralded as one of the most efficient and attractive municipal water supply systems both in the United States and abroad.

Tourists flocked to the site to see the gazebos and fountains in the gardens that surrounded the Federal and Greek revival-style buildings. Pictures of the stately structures and the Schuylkill River appeared in ads for ice skates, on firemen's hats, and on sheet music and gilded vases.

Charles Dickens sailed from England in 1842 and toured the Water Works, describing it as a place ... "wondrous to behold."

Steam power was becoming a mighty force in the valley, not only on the railroads which eventually replaced the canals, but on rivers and streams, too. In 1790, a steam-powered boat built by John Fitch, a little known gunsmith from Trenton, began scheduled trips between his hometown and Philadelphia. Historians believe it was the first steam packet to operate in America, sailing 17 years before the more celebrated Robert Fulton unveiled his steam-powered vessel, the Clermont.

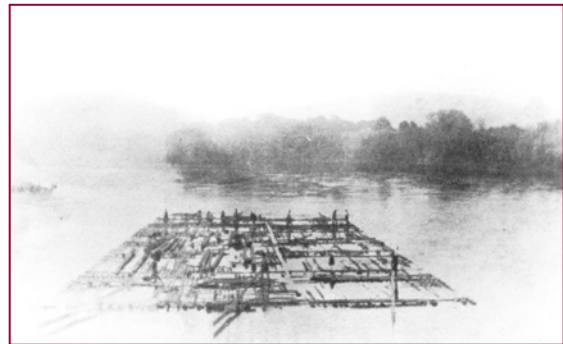
A spit of land in the Delaware played a role in a revolution that grew out of a split over ideologies. During the Civil War, 12,000 Confederate prisoners, including most of the soldiers captured at Gettysburg, were housed on Pea Patch Island, located downstream of New Castle, Del., which was colonized by the Dutch in 1651.

The 2002 Sojourn began at Milford, Pa. and ended at a wildlife refuge bordering Philadelphia.

It followed the route traveled by Daniel Skinner, one of the first loggers on the river.

According to historians, Skinner and two mates launched an 80-foot long raft of lashed logs from the Catskill Mountain settlement of Cochecton, N.Y., sometime during the 1760s.

Shipbuilders offered up a rousing welcome when Skinner and one of the mates (the other drowned) came ashore in Philadelphia, some 200 miles downstream. Overjoyed with the fresh supply of timber, the shipbuilders honored Skinner (some say he honored himself) with the title “Lord High Admiral of the Delaware.”



This is a photograph of one of the last rafts to float down the Delaware. It was 190 feet long and 85 feet wide. (Courtesy of Mrs. Walter J. Hankins)

For years Skinner had a lock on the title and the river’s timber trade. He was a pioneer whose ingenuity changed the face of a major waterway. His river adventure had opened up a new trade route – the New World’s woodlands now providing timber once harvested from fabled British forests felled by the axe of colonization.

Daniel Skinner died in 1813. Almost 200 years would pass before his honorary title would be bestowed on a new generation of folks drawn to the river. In 1997, the title and a modified version created to mesh with the ways of modern times, were bestowed on a handful of people who became the first “Lady and Lord High Admirals” of the Delaware River Sojourn.

It has since become a tradition of the sojourn that “High Admirals” are selected each year as tributes to those who have made outstanding contributions to protect the health of the Delaware.

Sojourners travel in canoes and other non-motorized water craft guided by professional safety patrols. Paddlers traverse mostly placid water, interrupted by scattered riffles and relatively tame rapids on a waterway free of major obstructions.

Skinner and the other frontiersmen who challenged nature’s fury in search of riches encountered a much different journey.

Rafts slammed into ice jams, coal barges, ferry boats, and other rafts that had been slowed by slack waters up ahead. Gunfights broke out among nerve-tattered boatmen desperate for landfall. No wonder then, that at the end of many a voyage, raftsmen would be known to partake of “an invigorator from the whiskey jug.”